

There was no objection.

The Clerk read as follows:

Amendment No. 22 Offered by Mr. HENSARLING:

At the end of the bill (before the short title), insert the following:

None of the funds in this Act may be used for the Edmunds Center for the Arts, City of Edmunds (WA).

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to the order of the House of today, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HENSARLING) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Chairman, there are a number of earmarks in this bill that are somewhat similar to this one. I will be the first to admit I don't know all that much about the Edmonds Center for the Arts. But as I follow these typical earmark debates, I know that soon there will be a Member to come to the floor to tell me he knows his district better than I do. Mr. Chairman, I concede the point.

He will also tell me that this body has the authority to provide for this earmark. Mr. Chairman, I once again concede the point.

I am sure they will come down here and say good things can be done with the money. Mr. Chairman, once again, I will concede the point.

They will also tell us well, it is a very small portion of the Federal budget. Mr. Chairman, I will concede the point.

But here is what I will not concede: the money is a very small portion of the Federal budget. But I fear again that earmarks in general, and perhaps this category in specific, become a larger portion of the culture of spending which is harmful to the Nation. We need to look at it very closely.

Often amendments are brought to the floor that many Members will say this is just draconian. We can't manage to spend less money here. Okay, so we offer earmark amendments and people say, well, it is just a small portion of the Federal budget. It is kind of like either the porridge is too hot or the porridge is too cold. When is the right time to offer an amendment to try to save taxpayers money?

So this is money that under the certification letter the funding would be used for renovation of the Edmonds Center for the Arts. Again, there are a number of earmarks that do this. I assume, frankly, there are Members of both parties that are requesting this funding. But it needs to be put in context because every time we so-called "invest" in a project like this, there is somebody out in America that is being divested in order to pay for the investment. So we have to look very closely at where this money is coming from.

Now, Member after Member comes to the floor to tell us we should do everything we can to preserve the Social Security trust fund. We know under our unified budget today that as long as we are running a deficit, and unfortu-

nately we still are, it is declining due to lots of tax revenue, but we still have a deficit. We know that this expenditure is going to come ultimately out of the Social Security trust fund. Yet so many Members come to the floor to decry the practice. So is this money going to the Edmonds Center for the Arts worth raiding the Social Security trust fund? I believe not.

In addition, we know that the Democrats, Mr. Chairman, in their budget resolution, it contains the single largest tax increase in American history. Over 5 years if we don't figure out a way to stop it, the average American family will have an average \$3,000 a year tax burden. That is money coming out of their pocket that they could have used for their arts, their entertainment, and their transportation; but they are being divested in order to invest in centers for the arts.

As I said earlier, I have no doubt that the sponsor of the earmark knows his district better than I do, just like I know my district better than he does. In talking to people in the Fifth Congressional District of Texas, they think their tax money might be used for better purposes. And if it is going to go to art centers, they kind of prefer that Mesquite Art Center be funded. They prefer the Henderson County Performing Arts Center be funded. They prefer the Lake Country Playhouse in Mineola to be funded; and they prefer the Kaufman County Civic Theater in Terrell, Texas, be funded, and the list goes on.

Given that we are threatened with the single largest tax increase in history, a vote for this is to raid the Social Security trust fund. And already with the spending we have, we are due to double taxes on the next generation.

I know Congress has the right to do this. I don't question our authority; I question our wisdom in doing that.

Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Chairman, I rise to claim the time in opposition.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from Washington is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. INSLEE. This is a misguided amendment. It is quite a surprise that of all of the decent efforts to help communities across the country, for some reason the gentleman picked this one. That is something beyond at least my understanding. The particular project involved here is a community center that is involved in a whole host of youth projects, including the Edmonds Boys and Girls Club, the Sno-King County Youth Club, the Triple Threat Basketball Club, the Brighton School, the Cascade Symphony Orchestra, the Edmonds High School Multi-Class Reunion, the Olympic Ballet Theater, the Sno-King Community Chorale, and Edmonds Community College.

I don't know why those seem like such un-American activities to the

gentleman, but to our community and to the country at large, those are integral parts of our communities. I may note this is not a situation where somehow there has been some sort of Federal largesse, that is an intrusion into the community.

This is an effort where we have multiple parties that have been associated with funding this project. This is not just the Federal Government. In fact, it is less than 10 percent of the entire project. It is financed with Federal funds. It is largely a matter of local development, including a variety of local corporations. So where we have less than 10 percent in this final phase, why this has been selected doesn't make sense.

Now there is a difference, I suppose. I hold a press release from the author of the amendment dated February 28, 2007, announcing that the city of Winnsboro, Texas, had received \$100,000 in Federal funds. The author of the amendment said: "I am excited that some of the hard-earned tax dollars sent to Washington are flowing back into the county." There is a difference, I suppose, between that money flowing to Edmonds, Washington. In that case it was money going to the proponent of this amendment. In this case it goes to a different one. I am not sure I understand the difference.

I guess the difference is the money that went to Texas was chosen by the bureaucrats. The money that is selected here has been chosen by the United States House of Representatives. Now, I don't know why the proponent believes there is some intrinsic genius of the bureaucrats. Some believe all bureaucrats are smarter than all Congressmen, or the least wise bureaucrat is smarter than the most intelligent Congressman. Some may hold that view; I don't.

We have a valid community purpose here. We have a small Federal commitment, and we have a useful thing that is helping kids at risk as well as community development. I note that an economic evaluation of this particular project showed that it would have significant economic value as well as community value in helping the kids in these local communities.

So I would commend this small investment of Federal dollars in this community.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HENSARLING).

The question was taken; and the Acting Chairman announced that the noes appeared to have it.

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Chairman, I demand a recorded vote.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to clause 6 of rule XVIII, further proceedings on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Texas will be postponed.

Mr. OLIVER. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.